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Security Council

Forty-ninth Year

Provisional

3354th Meeting
Friday, 25 March 1994, 6 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Mérimée	(France)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Ricardes
	Brazil	Mr. Valle
	China	Mr. Chen Jian
	Czech Republic	Mr. Kovanda
	Djibouti	Mr. Olhaye
	New Zealand	Mr. van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mr. Gambari
	Oman	Mr. Al-Sameen
	Pakistan	Mr. Marker
	Russian Federation	Mr. Vorontsov
	Rwanda	Mr. Bizimana
	Spain	Mr. Perez-Griffo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir David Hannay
	United States of America	Mr. Inderfurth

Agenda

The situation in Georgia

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1994/312 and Add.1)

94-85324 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Georgia

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1994/312 and Add.1)

The President *(interpretation from French):* I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Georgia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia) took a place at the Council table.

The President *(interpretation from French):* The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, documents S/1994/312 and Add.1.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1994/347, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to documents S/1994/317 and S/1994/343, which contain the texts of letters dated 21 and 24 March 1994, respectively, from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Al-Sameen (Oman) *(interpretation from Arabic):* I am grateful to you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak on the question of Georgia.

My delegation would like to explain its vote before the voting on the draft resolution before us. We attach the greatest importance to the need for a settlement of the situation in Georgia and of the conflict in Abkhazia, which requires a resumption of negotiations in order to arrive at a peaceful resolution. The best way to settle the conflict, we believe, is a resumed dialogue between the two parties in a climate of understanding and political good will, precisely in order to reach a political settlement.

My delegation feels that the prime purpose of the Security Council and the international community must be, at this stage, to strengthen the peace process and strongly to encourage the two parties to negotiate. In previous resolutions, the Council established a link between extending the mandate of the United Nations observers in Georgia and the need to make progress towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. However, we note that no settlement has yet been reached; despite successive stages of negotiations between the two parties held under the auspices of the United Nations, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Russian Federation.

Nevertheless, on an exceptional basis, in order not to hamper the peace process, the Security Council has decided to extend the mandate of the Observer Mission in Georgia, and we note that operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution refers to consideration of the possible establishment of a peace-keeping force in Abkhazia.

My delegation does not consider it appropriate for the Council to be considering this matter at present. On the contrary, my Government feels that the Council's involvement in such details is premature and may well set a dangerous precedent leading to complications in the situation.

The Security Council should not intervene. However, in a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding, we have attempted to make the text more acceptable by amending it to reflect the reality in the field as we see it and to keep the Council from intervening prematurely in these kinds of issues, particularly given the unfortunate current financial situation of the United Nations.

These considerations, however, are not reflected in the draft resolution before the Council, despite my delegation's efforts and those of other interested delegations. Nevertheless, in order to reach a consensus, and aware that the concerned parties in Georgia will accept the United Nations forces, my delegation, as I have said, has joined the consensus and will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

The President *(interpretation from French):* I now put the draft resolution (S/1994/347) to the vote.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Djibouti, France, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President *(interpretation from French):* There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 906 (1994).

I shall now call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian):* The delegation of the Russian Federation attaches importance to the appeal, contained in the resolution just adopted by the Security Council, for the parties to resume the negotiations as soon as possible and to achieve substantive progress towards a political settlement based on the principles set out in the Council's previous resolutions. Foremost among those principles, in the opinion of the Russian Federation, is respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia. We are satisfied that this principle has been clearly restated in today's resolution.

The letter dated 24 March 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Security Council (S/1994/343) confirms his Government's readiness to continue negotiations with a view to reaching a comprehensive political settlement in Abkhazia. We welcome that statement and also note that the head of the Georgian delegation to the Geneva talks, Mr. Jaba Ioseliani, in his letter of 21 March 1994 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1994/317) confirms the Government of Georgia's willingness to broaden the political and legal status of Abkhazia and, in order to vest it with real substance, to divide the governing competencies between the State governing bodies of the Republic of Georgia and of Abkhazia, including the granting of exclusive competencies to the latter. This position of the Government of the Republic of Georgia is an important prerequisite for the success of the talks.

We are convinced that the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Georgia, Ambassador Edouard Brunner - who has already done much to bring the parties closer together - will be able to resume the negotiating process immediately. We confirm our readiness to continue to work closely with him with a view to contributing to the early attainment of a political settlement of the conflict.

The Russian Federation considers that the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) is accomplishing very useful work. We are grateful to General Hvidegaard, the head of the Mission, for his effective work. We believe that, within the existing mandate, it will be possible to mobilize further the activities of the Mission and that the Secretary-General will keep in mind the possibilities available to him to expand it. In this context, great importance attaches to the appeal to the parties, contained in the resolution just adopted, to take all necessary steps to ensure the security of UNOMIG personnel and its freedom of movement throughout the territory of the Republic of Georgia.

Of particular importance is the Security Council's confirmation of its intention duly to consider the possible establishment of a peace-keeping force in Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, in the context of the efforts to achieve a political settlement. It is important that the two sides be able to consider the possibility of the establishment of a United Nations peace-keeping operation, which the Georgian and Abkhaz sides alike have repeatedly and insistently requested. In this connection, I should like to recall that the Georgian Head of State, Eduard A. Shevardnadze, in his statement to the Security Council on 9 March, stressed the great importance of the deployment in the zone of conflict of United Nations peace-

keeping forces - without which it would be impossible to attain a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia - and of ensuring the safe return to Abkhazia of refugees and displaced persons, without which it would of course be impossible to end the conflict.

The Russian Federation fully shares the position of the Georgian leadership. We also believe that the deployment of United Nations peace-keeping forces in the zone of conflict is indispensable to ensuring that the peace process becomes irreversible.

In that connection, the Russian Federation considers it essential that the Council confirm its request to the Secretary-General to report on whatever progress is made in the negotiations as soon as it is achieved and on the situation on the ground, with special attention to the circumstances that might warrant a peace-keeping force and on the modalities for such a force. It is important that the Secretariat continue preparatory work for such a United Nations operation so that it can be deployed immediately once the Security Council has taken a decision to do so.

Mr. Kovanda (Czech Republic): It is by default that we have today adopted a resolution which in a sense is only technical. My delegation would have been prepared to discuss a very substantial resolution that would have authorized a serious peace-keeping effort in Georgia, for the situation there has not improved one iota since President Shevardnadze addressed this Council two or three weeks ago and eloquently requested the dispatch of such a force. We still hope that we will have the opportunity to discuss such a force sometime in the future.

Unfortunately, the results of negotiations between the Georgian and Abkhaz parties have not been nearly as encouraging as we had all hoped. The Secretary-General, in his very, very sober report of 18 March (S/1994/312), notes that the parties are far apart on three absolutely fundamental issues: recognition of the territorial integrity of Georgia; the repatriation of refugees and stateless persons; and the role and area of deployment of a possible peace-keeping force.

Safeguarding the territorial integrity of Georgia is an issue upon which the Council has insisted on other occasions too. It is an issue that transcends Georgia itself: several former States that have disintegrated in recent years have bequeathed us the legacy of former internal borders. The issue of the borders between the former constituent parts of these States turning into international borders has become a burning issue. Georgia is an additional example of the dangers inherent in efforts to change these borders by force.

The right of refugees to return to their homes is a crucial right which we uphold in the case of Georgia as we do elsewhere in the world. Refining further the novel concept of "ethnic cleansing", Abkhazian authorities now seem to wish to screen those of the quarter-million refugees from Abkhazia who wish to return home. Those authorities wish to make sure that none of those refugees who might have actively defended their homes from the "ethnic cleansers" return. This is unacceptable.

In addition to the humanitarian aspect of the refugee issue, there is also the aspect concerning what one might call the politics of demographics. The inhabitants of Abkhazia certainly will have a say in the future of their region. The important thing, though, is that all inhabitants of Abkhazia *ante bellum* should have such a say. We have always recognized the multi-ethnic character Abkhazia has had in the past. We find abhorrent any efforts to change its ethnic composition by force, in order to pursue ulterior political motives.

Finally, the parties disagree on the role and area of deployment of peace-keepers. The Abkhazian leaders would like a peace-keeping operation to petrify, in essence, the line that today separates the territory they control from the rest of Georgia. My delegation believes that we do not need any more countries divided by a United Nations-protected "green line". The Georgian Government in turn wishes for a peace-keeping operation to oversee and safeguard the safe return of refugees, against Abkhaz opposition if need be. This, however, would probably call implicitly for a Chapter-VII operation.

The Czech delegation believes that, even with these constraints, we can try to maximize our effectiveness. In our resolution, we urge the parties to continue talking, and in fact to establish a mechanism for a permanent dialogue, rather than just hold ad hoc meetings. We welcome in this context the readiness which the Georgian Government has expressed to continue negotiations. We furthermore reiterate our encouragement to States to lend a helping hand to Georgia in coping with hundreds of thousands of its internal refugees - without the benefit of international television cameras.

Finally - and here is the true technical nature of today's resolution - we are extending the mandate of our tiny little United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia

(UNOMIG) by another three months. We stress in this context the necessity for their safety and freedom of movement. We would hate to see a repetition of the situation that occurred in the Gali region in early February. On that occasion, fighting broke out with perhaps thousands of combatants involved, resulting in additional thousands of refugees, but UNOMIG was denied access to the area for days. We should like to see the situation of UNOMIG improve enough for the chief military observer to find it useful to build the Mission up to its full authorized strength.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to recall that Abkhazia is not the only problem Georgia faces. Another one is southern Ossetia, where the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is very much involved. The two situations, of course, cannot help but influence each other. This in turn underlines the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and the CSCE. The early appointment of a liaison officer between the two organizations on the spot, as recently recommended by the CSCE's Committee of Senior Officials, should be the next practical manifestation of that cooperation.

Mr. Gambari (Nigeria): My delegation too would like to thank the Secretary-General for his useful report on the situation in Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, which was the basis for our deliberations leading to the resolution we have just adopted, and of which my delegation voted in favour.

My Government remains concerned by the fact that the situation there continues to be grave in spite of the various efforts that have been made to address the situation. After listening to the very frank and moving address by President Shevardnadze on 9 March, my delegation cannot but be convinced that the establishment of an appropriately composed peace-keeping operation would be most desirable. My delegation believes that such a United Nations presence would make a very positive contribution to the international peace efforts in that troubled country. We believe too that the deployment of such a force, when carried out, would not only further assure the possibility of a workable and durable cease-fire but would also constitute a suitable confidence-building measure, which would facilitate the early return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes.

The issue of refugees and displaced persons is of special interest to my delegation. As many members of the Council are probably aware, one out of every two refugees in the world is African. We have serious refugee situations in Angola, Mozambique, Liberia and, more recently, Burundi. My delegation therefore welcomes the reference in the resolution to the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in secure conditions. We support also the call on donor States to make the necessary contributions to the United Nations humanitarian appeal.

Meanwhile, my Government fully endorses the need for the parties to the conflict and all others concerned to respect another principle that is very dear to us in Africa: the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, in this case the Republic of Georgia. Now is the time to stress the necessity for all concerned to do what is necessary to reach expeditiously vital agreements on outstanding matters related to the situation in Abkhazia, including Abkhazia's political status. It is important also, while all these efforts are in progress, that the security and safety of the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) should be assured.

Finally, my delegation wishes to thank the relevant Governments and international organizations that have been playing a very constructive role in the efforts of the United Nations to bring peace to the area and protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia. We especially appreciate the efforts of neighbouring States and the specialized role of the organizations concerned with the prosecution of humanitarian activities in Georgia. We urge that these efforts be sustained until peace is fully restored in Georgia.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 906 (1994). The situation in Georgia continues to be of great concern. We regret that no political settlement has been achieved despite all the diplomatic efforts carried out to date. My delegation firmly believes that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Georgia should be fully respected, as stated in the Council's previous resolutions as well as in resolution 906 (1994).

We are also deeply concerned by the reports of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees in Georgia as a result of the fighting. The displaced persons and refugees have a right to return to their homes in conditions of safety. The international community should be able to provide prompt and adequate assistance. We note that an early deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia is supported by both sides, though with important differences as to the modalities. We support the deployment of such an operation as a crucial element of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict, as

soon as there is enough common ground between the parties to ensure the proper functioning, as well as the safety, of a possible peace-keeping operation.

The resolution that we have just adopted reiterates the call for the Secretary-General to report to the Council on whatever progress is made in the negotiations as soon as it is achieved. We urge both parties to negotiate in good faith; otherwise, the political process will become hostage to deliberate procrastination by one of the parties, thus jeopardizing prospects for a peaceful settlement acceptable to all.

The President *(interpretation from French):* I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of France.

The draft resolution on which my delegation has just voted in favour is not the one that the French Government would have wished to see adopted today by the Security Council. We would have much preferred today to be making provisions that would enable the United Nations to make its contribution to the implementation of a comprehensive settlement agreed to between the parties.

The priority from now on is therefore the resumption of negotiations, so that there is an end to the fighting and to the suffering inflicted on the civil population. The international community must not resign itself to the impasse that followed the last meeting in New York, at the highest level between the Government of Georgia and the Abkhaz side. We therefore call on the parties to resume negotiations without delay, and in this connection we welcome the statement on this topic issued on 24 March by the Government of Georgia.

The parties will have to demonstrate flexibility and realism in the negotiations. We strongly urge them to take the fullest account of the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, to whom we pay tribute and in whom we again express our confidence. The fact that we so earnestly desire flexibility and realism does not mean that we are prepared to renounce the fundamental principles set out in the United Nations Charter. I am thinking here particularly about respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, which the Council has unambiguously reaffirmed in the resolution that it has just adopted.

Once an overall political agreement has been concluded it will be up to the Council to decide on the deployment of a peace-keeping operation with the mandate of ensuring that commitments are honoured. In this connection, I should like to make two points that my authorities regard as essential. First, United Nations involvement requires respect for certain rules - in particular, the impartiality of the forces in the field and effective control by the Security Council over carrying out their mandate. Secondly, with regard to the manner of deployment there can be no question of setting up a new buffer force that would result only in freezing the military situation and political positions. We have too many examples of peace-keeping forces of that kind, condemned to have their mandates extended indefinitely, perhaps to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, but with no gain for the cause of peace.

As soon as a lasting political agreement has been concluded and the conditions for United Nations intervention in line with the Organization's principles have been guaranteed the French Government will be prepared to consider favourably the establishment of a peace-keeping operation and to take action in the Council so that a decision to that end is taken without delay. This is, moreover, the signal sent by resolution 906 (1994), which we fully endorse.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no further speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.